

How to be an Informed Consumer



How to be an Informed Consumer when you Purchase a Ropes Challenge Course or Other Related Course or Training

The following are suggestions on what to look for when purchasing construction, inspection or training services for a ropes challenge course. As an informed consumer, it is important to question vendors so that you will not be misled.

Questions to ask Vendors

General Questions

1. Do you have insurance for building, materials, training, inspection, and programming?
2. Do you have references or documentation (regional, national, or international)? Often vendors with international experience are more skilled because they have learned to be resourceful in acquisition of materials and in applying standards.
3. Who is going to do the training, building, and inspection? Ask for the individual's name and resume or documentation. Be aware of companies inflating their resumes by totaling up years of experience, rather than being specific about the experience of each individual.
4. What professional organizations are you a member of? Vendors who belong to multiple organizations are generally more knowledgeable about the industry and can withstand the scrutiny of their peers.
5. Can you supply me with presentations or articles you have written? Vendors who have written articles or done presentations are often more knowledgeable about the industry.

How to be an Informed Consumer - page 2



Construction and Building Questions

1. What is the experience of the builder? Has he done much programming from the facilitators' point of view, so that he truly understands your needs? Can the builder construct user-friendly ropes challenge course elements?
2. Does the builder understand the difference between a trade and a profession? A trade is comparable to belonging to a skilled laborer organization. A profession is someone who is skilled with dealing with people's needs.
3. Does the builder follow PRCA and ACCT standards?
These are minimum standards, not the highest standards.
4. Does the builder follow manufacturing recommendations for supplies or equipment? If your vendor doesn't understand the limits and recommendations of the materials used, this could result in grave consequences to the customer at a later date.
5. Does he explain what you are getting concerning the elements on the ropes challenge course? Examples of Specifications: Nitro Crossing separate, not combined; The Wall - 8 feet wide versus 6-feet wide; eye bolts placed on poles for belay points; platform on back of the wall or no platform; screwed wooden structures versus nailed wooden structures; layout of the elements separated, not constructed together to save cost; wooden supports used to separate the 3-Line Bridge hand lines instead of just bolts; Tension Triangle Traverse and Wild Woozy constructed as one element; long lengths on elements versus short lengths; short length on Pamper Pole width, between poles; craftsmanship - wooden edges routed; climbing tower's placement of boards; staples on every pole versus on every other pole; staples placed on both poles of Dangle-Duo and Pamper Pole or on zip line end pole; uses a small rope diameter on Nitro Crossing swing rope instead of a large diameter rope; boundary supports made for the Nitro Crossing; hand ropes adjustable with prussic on Tire Traverse, Heebie Jeebie and Two Line Bridge; Duo Belays on elements; swages versus cable clamps; tumbuckles included with low cable events so they are adjustable.
6. Does he offer a warranty for the course and equipment?
Most builders should have at least a one-year warranty on construction.
7. Is the equipment offered of the quality you want? If not, is there a trade-off in price?
Ask for justification in fact and not just a personal preference.
8. Is the vendor knowledgeable about current arborist practices if trees are used (including trimming and mulching of trees)?

How to be an Informed Consumer - page 3



Training and Programming Questions

1. What is the experience of the trainer? Has the trainer had much experience in different populations or with your population served?
2. Does the trainer have insurance? What type and insured up to what limits?
3. Does the trainer have a curriculum design that includes things you feel are important? A suggestion that should be considered for a professional practice curriculum must include philosophy and ethics.
4. Does the vendor have written materials that include technical and processing/review materials? Does the material include ways to produce a manual after training?
5. Does the vendor include ways for contact or supervision after training if you have questions?
6. Can the vendor offer other services for other types of adventure programming?

Inspection Questions

1. Does the vendor issue a written report with problems explained in detail? Is there an explanation on the difference between a personal preference and a PRCA or ACCT standard?
2. Does their inspector have the specific knowledge to review an Operations Manual of Policies and Procedures and to make corrections?